Letter to Editor

Carcinoma in-situ in a tiny epidermal cyst

Sir,

Cutaneous epidermal cysts are common lesions comprising approximately 85-90% of all excised cysts. Malignant change is extremely rare and it should be suspected in patients with atypical or larger cysts or a history of cyst recurrence. Hence, we report this case of epidermal cyst in the anterior chest wall with carcinoma in situ, with a short history of only one month and it is possibly the smallest size to be documented in the English literature. A 38-year-old female presented to surgical OPD with a tiny subcutaneous swelling, 1 cm in diameter, on the anterior chest wall, since 1 month. The swelling was non-tender, soft and movable. The diagnosis of epidermal cyst was made clinically. Surgical excision of the cyst was performed with about 1 cm of surrounding skin. Gross examination revealed a cystic lesion about 0.6 cm in diameter, in the upper dermas, with unremarkable overlying skin. On cutting open the cyst, it was filled with whitish gelatinous material. Microscopically, the cyst was seen lined by stratified squamous epithelium. The squamous cells were seen proliferating in tiny nests (Figure 1). In one focus, proliferating cells were involving the full thickness of the lining with peripheral palisading. Moderate atypia was noted. A diagnosis of epidermal cyst with carcinoma in situ was offered. There was no history of any lymph node enlargement anywhere or any other skin nodule.

Epidermal cysts are commonly encountered in surgical practice. Malignant change is extremely rare. A compilation of a major large series by Ana Lucia et al revealed 72 carcinomas in 3300 cysts examined, giving an incidence of 2.2%. Others have been sporadic case reports. In different reports, different sizes of epidermal cysts have been shown to have a malignant potential with sizes as small as 1.1 cm. Malignant change should be suspected in atypical or large cysts or in a history of cyst recurrence. But to the best of our knowledge, malignant change in a size as our case has not been described previously in the literature. The tendency for the cyst to become malignant may increase as the patient grows older. We report a rare case of an epidermal cyst, 0.5 cm in size, with carcinoma in situ in a 38-year-old female who presented with a short history of only one month. We, therefore, emphasize the importance of subjecting all resected skin cystic specimens to microscopic examination.

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